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Items 27, 28, 29, 30 and 32 of the agenda

COMMENTS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON ITEMS PRESENTED BY MEMBER STATES WHICH MAY HAVE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Following 170 EX/Decision 5.1, which states that “the Executive Board shall not take a decision involving expenditure unless it has before it a report from the Director-General on the administrative and financial implications of the proposal”, the Director-General is presenting her comments on five items presented by Member States at the present session of the Executive Board.

Item 27 Proposal for the proclamation of an International Day of Light – 200 EX/27, Item proposed by Ghana, Mexico, New Zealand and Russian Federation

2. The Director-General expresses her appreciation to the sponsoring Member States for introducing this item which proposed an International Day of Light on 16 May – the anniversary of the first operation of the laser. Such a day would represent concrete follow-up of the successful United Nations International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies celebrated in 2015 under UNESCO’s leadership.

3. The Director-General agrees that light plays a central role in human activities and that applications of light-based technologies are key enablers to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement for Climate Change, particularly when it comes to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through solar and LED energy efficient lighting. Limited access to energy and lighting also has a serious impact on income-generation for workers who are unable to further their activity at night. In this context, an International Day of Light will be an important enabler for outreach on innovative light and energy solutions for progress, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

4. The Director-General therefore agrees that an International Day of Light, providing an annual focus on the continued appreciation of the central role that the science of light and related technologies play in the lives of people everywhere, with a significant contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda, would be welcomed. It would benefit the programme and activities of UNESCO in natural science and STEM education in particular.

5. The International Day of Light will continue to be financed entirely from extra-budgetary resources as was successfully done in 2015. Consortium partners from the Year are already planning allocations for an International Day of Light and the photonics industry remains well-funded and willing to contribute. The administrative impact of reviewing patronage requests and organizing events using extra-budgetary resources would be covered by the work of the International Basic Sciences Programme and related minimal staff time.

6. Therefore, the Director-General welcomes the proposed draft decision.



Item 28 Education for refugees – 200 EX/28 Rev., Item proposed by Greece

7. The Director-General expresses her appreciation to Greece for introducing this item to further enhance UNESCO's activities to provide lifelong learning opportunities for forcibly displaced people. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), an estimated 65.3 million people are now either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee, and every minute 24 people are displaced from their home.

8. The Director-General observes that this proposal is in line with UNESCO's programme priorities which contributes to the global Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the Member States in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls to "ensure inclusive and equitable education" and stresses the importance of education in mitigating disaster and conflict, and promoting peace as well as in protecting people in vulnerable situations.

9. The Director-General reiterates the importance of guaranteeing equal access to quality education for adults and children in such situation, through a human-rights based approach. Although ensuring the right to education is fundamental in all phases of the migration context, there is a particular need to draw attention to the stabilisation phase and resettlement, involving educational policies and legal frameworks of Member States hosting the refugees.

10. In this regard, the Director-General welcomes the proposal for UNESCO to provide further technical support in integrating the issues of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and National Education Sector Policy Plans. Currently, UNESCO is supporting the Ministry of Education of Greece to define how UNESCO's expertise can support their plan for providing education for refugees in Greece. UNESCO welcomes the recognition, by the proponent of this item, of the achievements of its Regional Education Response Strategy for the Syria Crisis: "Bridging Learning Gaps for Youth".

11. However, the Director-General would like to stress that further extra-budgetary funding will be necessary to provide adequate technical support in this area.

Item 29 From COP 21 to COP 22: UNESCO's contribution and perspective in the fight against climate change – 200 EX/29 Rev., Item proposed by Morocco

12. The Director-General welcomes this item proposed by France and the Kingdom of Morocco focusing on climate change and the important outcomes of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), notably the Paris Agreement, and the upcoming COP 22 in Marrakech, Morocco, being held from 7 to 18 November 2016. COP 22 provides an opportunity for Morocco to bring forward the voice of the most vulnerable countries and groups having to face climate change, notably countries in Africa and Small Island Developing States, and more broadly developing countries and groups such as indigenous peoples and women.

13. The Director-General is committed to reflect the outcomes of COP 22 as appropriate in the final proposal for an updated UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change and would welcome voluntary support from Member States for the scaling-up of UNESCO's climate change actions, which are in increasing demand. The UNESCO Task Force on Climate Change will be requested to prepare an internal work programme on UNESCO's participation at COP 22.

14. The Director-General welcomes the draft decision, as the specific topics mentioned are currently within the approved programme and budget of MP II and it thus does not represent any additional cost.

Item 30 Contribution of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) to the preparation of and follow-up to the 22nd Conference of Parties (COP 22) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – 200 EX/30, Item proposed by Morocco

15. The Director-General expresses her appreciation to the Kingdom of Morocco for introducing this item requesting the creation of a special account for the Intentional Hydrological Programme (IHP) to enable it to receive financial aid as desired by the Member States to reinforce their capacity to implement the principal initiatives as approved under the eighth strategic plan of IHP.

16. The Director-General wishes to inform the Executive Board that the request for the creation of a special account for the IHP is one of the recommendations adopted by 22nd session of the IHP Council. The Secretariat is already in the process of assessing the feasibility of this recommendation, in line with UNESCO standard procedures for the creation of such accounts. Such a special account is intended to receive voluntary financial contributions for the work of IHP, including in relation to climate change.

17. The Director-General welcomes the proposal of the Kingdom of Morocco to set up a strategy to raise the visibility of water and its importance in the future sessions of the UNFCCC COP, including at COP 22. To this end, IHP's contribution to raising the profile of water issues in climate change is part of the global strategy developed with its partners such as UN-Water, the World Water Council and in close collaboration with the different high level panels on water. These collective actions have contributed to the recognition and organization of a Water Day at COP 22. Water Day is indeed intended to bring attention to the role of water in climate adaptation and mitigation. Within this context, IHP is also coordinating a series of events at the UNESCO Pavilion in partnership with the UNESCO water family (category 2 centres and UNESCO Chairs). Additionally, IHP is also organising side events in the framework of COP22.

18. The Director-General expresses her gratitude to the Kingdom of Morocco for its request to ensure concrete follow-up to the recommendations emanating from COPs 21 and 22 and notes that any concrete follow-up action would require additional extrabudgetary funding.

19. The Director-General wishes to inform that since the IHP plays a prominent role in updating the UNESCO Climate Change Strategy, its planned actions will be contained in the revised Strategy to be presented to the Executive Board, at the 201st session.

Item 32 UNESCO's role in the promotion of linkages between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education qualifications – 200 EX/32, Item proposed by the Dominican Republic

20. The Director-General welcomes the proposed item presented by the Dominican Republic on UNESCO's role in promoting articulations between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education qualifications. The proposal is in line with UNESCO's efforts to strengthen the coordination and articulation between TVET and higher education in the context of lifelong learning, as reflected in the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

21. The recently renewed 2015 Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) stresses the importance of well-articulated qualifications frameworks and of enabling horizontal and vertical progression by establishing flexible learning pathways. Such mechanisms are essential for promoting learners' mobility, participation in further learning and access to decent work.

22. The issue of mobility of learners is also at the heart of the UNESCO Regional Conventions on Higher Education Qualifications, including the current work being undertaken by the Working

Group examining the possible revision of the Regional Convention for Latin America and the Caribbean.

23. The Director-General takes note of the invitation to consider the need for improved articulation between alternative learning pathways (including TVET) and Higher Education in the preparation of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications and she will bring this issue to the attention of the Drafting Committee of the Convention to consider in their elaboration of the draft text.

24. However, she would like to draw the attention of the Executive Board that the integration of the issue of recognition of technical and vocational skills qualifications into a normative instrument on higher education qualifications, would make the process of drafting the latter highly complex and present considerable obstacles in the elaboration and eventual implementation of such a Convention by Member States.

25. The Director-General reminds the Executive Board that it has approved the new Strategy for TVET (2016-2021) at its last session and an action plan on how to implement this Strategy is proposed to this session of the Executive Board. She will ensure that the Organization's limited human and financial resources are focused to implement this new Strategy. Should the Executive Board decide to request for a report on "best practices in promoting learning pathways and articulations between TVET and Higher Education" as proposed, she suggests that it be presented as an INF document to the 202nd session of the Executive Board.